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SUBJECT: USUNESCO: INTERNATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
ASSEMBLY (IOC/UNESCO) ESTABLISHES FRAMEWORK FOR TSUNAMI
WARNING SYSTEM, ADVANCES U.S. GOALS ON EARTH OBSERVATION

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4310

[1](#)1. Summary and Introduction: At the 23rd Session of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Assembly -- which took place June 20-30 2005 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris -- the U.S. delegation (USDEL) met all of its objectives. These included: encouraging fiscal transparency and accountability; further integrating the mission of the IOC with that of UNESCO's science and education sectors through mutual capacity building initiatives; and enhancing development of the Global Oceans Observation System (GOOS) and tsunami warning systems within the context of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). USDEL facilitated the drafting of resolutions that established a framework for a global tsunami and other ocean-related hazards early warning system, and formally launched regional efforts in the Indian Ocean, Caribbean, and the Mediterranean and Northern Atlantic. In addition, the U.S. retained its seat on the Executive Council and gained a Vice Chair slot on the International GOOS Steering Committee.

[1](#)2. Regarding the budget and strategic planning, the Assembly established a group (to work on-line in coming months) to plot strategy for the 2008-2009 program and budget that will take into account opportunities and challenges for operational oceanography posed by rapidly evolving technology and the development of the GEOSS. Regarding the 2006-2007 budget, USDEL led efforts to reject a draft budget presented by the secretariat that lacked clear rationale. The Assembly endorsed instead a revised budget that applies a uniform cut (of approximately 26 percent) to all IOC programs as an interim measure. USDEL also secured regular budget funds for the World Climate Research Program: the IOC contribution to this program has historically been sustained with U.S. extrabudgetary contributions.

[1](#)3. USDEL was led by U.S. Representative to the IOC and the NOAA/National Ocean Service Administrator, Dr. Richard Spinrad, and was comprised of experts from EPA, Navy (ONR Global Office, Oceanographer of the Navy), NOAA (National Ocean Service, National Weather Service, Oceans and Atmospheric Research), National Marine Fisheries Service, and State (U.S. Mission to UNESCO, OES/Oceans Affairs). The Assembly of 132 IOC Member States ran in parallel with five working groups and three intersessional committees (Finance, Elections, Resolutions). Several sidebar meetings and a reception hosted by the US Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, Ambassador Louise V. Oliver, were conducted to reinforce the goals of the USDEL.

[1](#)4. Full text of the report and resolutions can be found at www.unesco.ioc.org (or contact Liz Tirpak DOS/OES/OA, tirpakej@state.gov, 202-647-0238). Major decisions and resolutions are highlighted in the following paragraphs. End Summary and Introduction.

USDEL Promotes Strategic Ocean Research and Observations
Priorities at IOC Assembly: Highlights

[1](#)5. Key U.S. Achievements at the 23rd IOC Assembly:

The U.S. actively participated in the negotiation of four resolutions that separately 1) approved the effort to establish a framework for the Global tsunami and other ocean-related hazards early warning system, and 2) formally established such initiatives in the Indian Ocean, Caribbean, and the Mediterranean and Northern Atlantic regions (REFS A, B) (see para 6).

NOAA Administrator, Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, addressed the IOC in his capacity as GEO co-chair, and reinforced the IOC resolution that calls on GOOS to serve as the ocean component of GEOSS (para 10).

U.S. re-election to the IOC Executive Council, and as a Vice Chair of the International GOOS Steering Committee, assures continued opportunity for the U.S. to shape IOC and GOOS development (paras 11,25).

The Assembly adopted a U.S. proposal for a new strategic approach to address the 900K USD cuts in UNESCO funding over the new biennium. The U.S. proposal "saved" the IOC mapping program (that had been eliminated in a Secretariat budget proposal) and launched a new strategic review of IOC program and budget over the next year (paras 23-24).

The U.S., supported by other developed states, succeeded in stabilizing IOC funding to the World Climate Research Program, a U.S. and IOC priority for over the past decade (para 16).

Tsunami Warning System (TWS): Global and Regional Systems

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Formally Launched

16. The Assembly adopted four resolutions that separately approved 1) the creation of a framework for the Global tsunami and other ocean-related hazards early warning

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system, and 2) the formal establishment of such initiatives in the regions of the Indian Ocean, Caribbean, and the Mediterranean and Northern Atlantic. Australia announced its willingness to serve as the Secretariat of the Indian Ocean system - which was met with some resistance by India's UNESCO Perm Del, insisting that its name be removed from the list of co-sponsors of the IOTWS resolution - and announced the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean April 3-5 in Perth. The intent of the Perth meeting will be to work with experienced TWS operators to help draft the technical requirements. India will host a meeting later in the year to review the results of IOC-WMO assessment teams that are currently evaluating the infrastructure needs of the Indian Ocean states. USDEL involvement ensured formal Assembly recognition of the necessary linkages to the efforts of GEO and WMO.

Capacity Building Strategy and Implementation Plan

17. Since 2003, the IOC has been developing an integrated Capacity Building initiative; this initiative was formally launched with the adoption of Resolutions at this Assembly. The U.S. has played a key role in this process through financial and technical support. At the Assembly, USDEL, collaborating with the U.S. Mission to UNESCO, provided strong support to the adoption of the IOC capacity building (CB) Strategy and Implementation Plan. U.S. proposals to encourage support of GOOS implementation through the IOC capacity building initiative and to encourage IOC participation in UNESCO's cross-sector capacity building initiative were included in the two adopted resolutions.

18. The new biennial work plan for the IOC's capacity building program will consist of:

- regional assessments of existing capacities to undertake marine scientific research and operational oceanography;
- workshops to draft project proposals addressing high priority regional issues with clearly defined deliverables and associated performance indicators;
- team-building workshops to develop regional networks of scientists; and
- collaboration with UNESCO's cross-sector capacity-building activities.

IOC's Capacity Building Section Head, Dr. Erlich Desa, will continue to work with a Consultative Group on Capacity Building to advise on criteria for establishment of priorities and methodologies for assessment.

19. Dr. Kristina Katsaros, Chair-person of the Pan-Ocean Remote Sensing Conference (PORSEC), also presented a progress report on implementing the IOC's Plan for Capacity Building in Remote Sensing in Oceanography. The Assembly recommended that the IOC use its existing programs, including BILKO (a UNESCO, computer-based "hands-on" training program in coastal and marine remote sensing), in close cooperation with regional bodies, for developing training modules based on regional needs. Benefits from these workshops would accrue to fisheries, coastal management and oceanographic research.

Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS): A strong Role for the IOC

10. The IOC has been a Participating Organization of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) since its inception in 2003. The Assembly reiterated its support for the goals of GEO and called upon member states to participate fully by becoming members of GEO and linking their observing programs to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). Specifically, the Assembly called upon the members and participating organizations of GEO to recognize the observing programs of IOC, in particular the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), as a crucial component of GEOSS. The Assembly also called upon GEO to support the expansion of capabilities for multi-hazard warning systems, recognizing the IOC as the coordinating body for tsunami warning systems (TWS). This resolution was supported by Italy, Canada, Argentina, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Korea, Japan, Benin, Australia, Portugal, and Venezuela. The U.S. also intervened to express strong support for GEO and call for the recognition of GOOS as a key part of GEOSS and the IOC as coordinator for TWS in a multi-hazard context.

Intergovernmental Committee for the Global Ocean Observing System (I-GOOS): New Leadership, Terms of Reference

11. The outgoing Chair of I-GOOS (Dr. Silvana Vallergera, Italy) presented the goals and operations of I-GOOS during the past four years. Presently, thirteen GOOS Regional Alliances (GRAs) have been formed comprised of one hundred and eighty-five institutions from eighty-eight Nations. A new Chairperson has been elected for I-GOOS (France) and two new Vice-Chairpersons (United States and China). Dr. Vallergera noted that progress is being made with regard to GRAs working together. Two GOOS Regional Fora have occurred (Europe and Pacific Islands) and a third will occur in December for Africa. The coastal module of GOOS has been published. In response to the presentation, several interventions were made on the regional implementation of GOOS, noting that a strong GOOS Project Office (GPO) at IOC is necessary for this to be accomplished; this will require a budget commensurate with the expectations of Member States. Several member states indicated that GOOS should be a key element in the development of multi-hazard warning systems. The new Chair (Francois Gerard) presented his vision of the future of I-GOOS, noting in particular the need - evoked by Argentina -- to work closely with the IOC Advisory Body of Experts on the Law of the Sea (ABELOS) on the effort to clarify the legal framework for the collection of oceanographic data.

12. The Assembly adopted Revised Terms of Reference for I-GOOS and the GOOS Scientific Steering Committee (GSSC). These terms of reference address fundamental issues and should be applicable for a long period of time, regardless of changes in oceanographic sciences and the conduct of ocean observations. The drafting process began in March 2005 when the IOC distributed Circular Letter 2147 requesting member states comments on draft Terms of Reference for I-GOOS, the GSSC, and the GOOS Project Office (GPO). The GPO collated the comments received for the Assembly. Interested nations (approximately 35) participated in a working group to review the comments, preparing the revised set of Terms of Reference that was adopted by the Assembly. This revised version eliminated many procedural items that were present in the first draft circulated in March. In addition, the revised Terms of Reference only address I-GOOS and the GSSC. The guidance for the GPO was eliminated since it was agreed that the IOC Executive Secretary should prepare the Terms of Reference for the GPO as it is part of the Secretariat. The Terms of Reference also include the appointment of two additional vice-chairs for I-GOOS; it was agreed that this be done immediately by the Chair of I-GOOS, with close attention to balancing geographical representation.

Ocean Component of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) Implementation Plan and GOOS contribution to COP-10

13. The retiring Director of GCOS presented the background to the recently published Implementation Plan for the Global Observing System for Climate in Support of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) noting the identification in the Plan of forty-four "essential climate variables" that were developed from an initial list of hundreds of variables. The Plan includes a major satellite component along with in situ networks. The Plan identifies 41 specific actions in the ocean chapter, 21 of which are to be implemented by JCOMM. The Plan also includes the requirement for sustained product generation and improved data management and describes the link to the Global Earth Observing System of Systems. Priority areas in the Plan, focused on the 5-10 year time-frame, include (1) improved key satellite and in situ networks, (2) improved global analysis networks, (3) full participation, (4) data management including meta data. Key ocean actions are (1) ensuring climate quality and continuity for essential ocean satellite observations, (2) global coverage of the surface

network and (3) global coverage of the subsurface network. Satellite agencies within countries were asked to strengthen their efforts and coordinate their efforts. The Assembly noted the need for global coordination and participation to implement a program that no single or smaller group of nations could accomplish otherwise.

WMO-IOC Joint Commission for Oceanography and Marine Meteorology (JCOMM)

14. A brief report on JCOMM activities was made including the status of the observing system. The observing system is more than 50 percent complete with the global drifter program anticipating full implementation in September of this year. The Argo profiling float pilot project is not a JCOMM program but is linked to JCOMM and its initial implementation is expected to be completed by the end of 2006. The second JCOMM Assembly will take place in Halifax in September of this year. Challenges confronting JCOMM include (1) the sustainability of the observing system, (2) real-time dissemination of the observations, and (3) the synergy between JCOMM and IODE (International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange). Several interventions addressed the sustainability issue, noting that many of the systems within JCOMM remain funded through research budgets.

International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODIE), A Strategic Plan

15. The IODE program recently held its 17th meeting in Ostende, Belgium in conjunction with the opening of the new IODE Project Office at the Flanders Marine Science Institute. As a result of that meeting, IODE approved two resolutions and four recommendations for action that would improve its ability to facilitate effective data management for all IOC programs. As part of this, IODE has proposed the development of a Strategic Plan for Ocean Data and Information Management. A consultant will be hired to work with the IODE members to craft the Strategic Plan, provide a progress report to the IOC Executive Council in 2006, and provide a final report to the IOC Assembly in 2007. The IOC endorsed the meeting report and the timeline for the OD&IM plan, and will advance the program as possible within the current budget situation. The IODE resolution was strongly supported by Iran, France, Kenya, Australia, Argentina, China, Venezuela, Belgium, Chile, Brazil, Greece, Japan, United Kingdom, Ecuador, Korea, and Canada. The US also strongly supported the IODE program and indicated concerns about the very tight budget being provided to this program by the IOC and the need for other countries to consider contributing extrabudgetary funds to enhance it.

World Climate Research Program (WCRP): U.S. Leadership Stabilizes Budget Prospects

16. The U.S. early intervention in support of stabilizing the IOC's continued support of the World Climate Research Program played a key role in the Assembly's decision to support the WCRP at a proposed level of at least 125,000 USD per year from the Regular Budget. Originally, the IOC had proposed to support the WCRP at a 125K USD level from both regular budget and extrabudgetary sources. Australia, the U.K, and Canada joined the U.S. in emphasizing that a stable commitment cannot be achieved through the proposed budget that originally required over half of the IOC commitment to be contingent upon unreliable extra-budgetary funds. U.S. leadership succeeded in maintaining a meaningful IOC, ICSU, and WMO agreement to support WCRP and in sustaining IOC continued support even while major portions of the IOC budget are being cut to accommodate UNESCO's cutbacks in regular funding.

Intergovernmental Panel on Harmful Algal Blooms (IPHAB): Broad Support in Face of Cuts

17. At the conclusion of the report presented by IPHAB Chair Beatriz Reguera, the Assembly was asked to endorse the report of 7th Session of IPHAB, including a work plan for the new biennium, resolutions and recommendations and a proposed budget. As usual, member states' interventions, particularly those of developing states, indicated strong support of ongoing HAB activities. Many interventions, including that of the U.S., voiced strong concern over the proposed 40 percent cut to the IOC HAB Regular Program budget. The Executive Secretary indicated that the Regular Program budget is a small fraction of the total IOC HAB budget (the majority coming from Spain and Denmark's direct contributions) and the proposed cuts amount to only 28,000 USD for the biennium or 14,000 USD per year and will have only a small impact on the HAB work plan. In sidebar discussions, the IOC HAB Program Coordinator reiterated that these funds represent some of the only uncommitted funds available to the Secretariat to support HAB capacity building activities and are therefore critically important to the program.

Ocean Carbon: Assuming a New, Broader Mandate

118. Member states were asked to adopt the new terms of reference (TOR) and a new title -- "International Ocean Carbon Coordination Project, IOCCP" -- for the former IOC-SCOR Advisory Panel on Ocean Carbon Dioxide. The changes reflect a broadening of the panel's remit to include carbon compounds other than carbon dioxide and the panel's decision to provide international coordination of scientific activities, rather than just provide advice to the scientific community. The Assembly expressed broad support for changing the Terms of Reference and title. There was also strong support and appreciation expressed for the leadership of the IOC Ocean Carbon Program manager, Dr. Maria Hood, whose position is supported by the U.S. (National Science Foundation).

Census of Marine Life (CoML): In Search of Synergies

119. The Census of Marine Life is an international research program that is being supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation in the U.S. as well as by funding agencies from around the world for its first phase in 2000-2010. The IOC Executive Council expressed support for the program at its meeting in 2000. During the Assembly, Australia submitted a resolution that instructed the Executive Secretary to examine the potential for links between the primary elements of CoML and the IOC Main Lines of Action and to ensure coordination between the IOC International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) program and the CoML Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS). The resolution also requested IOC member states to encourage participation by their scientists in the program. This resolution was strongly supported by Canada, Chile, Belgium, Japan, Portugal, Venezuela, Cuba, Kuwait, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and Brazil. USDEL also expressed strong support for this initiative: the U.S. funds aspects of various CoML projects; hosts several of the program's coordinating offices, including the International Secretariat; and has a number of scientific institutions involved in the program.

Ocean Science Section Overview

120. The Head of the Ocean Science Section, Dr. Umit Unluata, briefly introduced this item, without offering the anticipated report on accomplishments for the biennium. IOC Chairman Pugh indicated that the activities and results of the Ocean Science Section are well known and documented in the Action Paper and as such introduction and debate were unnecessary. This elicited response from Portugal and Australia, who expressed some concern with the direction of the Section's activities and, in particular, a lack of progress on convening the Scientific Advisory Group for the Section as called for in the report of the 22nd Assembly in 2003. The Executive Secretary indicated that the group has been contacted and agreed to serve, and that a meeting will be held in October 2005. The U.S. welcomes the participation of the Group; it has three U.S. members: Dr. Andy Rosenberg (U. of New Hampshire), Dr. Biliana Cicin-Sain (University of Delaware), and Dr. Michael Reeve (NSF).

Concept Paper on Modalities of Implementation of IOC Programs in Regions: Improved Coordination Required

121. Dr. Mario Ruivo (Portugal), IOC Vice-Chairman for Regional Affairs, organized an intersessional effort to develop a concept paper on IOC programs in regions that the Assembly was asked to endorse. The paper is relatively short on detailed recommendations and inadequate to serve as the basis for the reform and revitalization of the IOC Regional bodies. One of its major recommendations was to create an open-ended intersessional working group to develop detailed recommendations. During a meeting of a working group on this topic that took place during the Assembly, U.S. delegates endorsed this recommendation, but also suggested that certain steps with no budgetary implications could be taken immediately to improve the effectiveness of the regional bodies. These include improved communications between member states within regions and with the Secretariat, increased coordination with other regional and sub-regional organizations (e.g., ASEAN, CARICOM, SOPAC), and resource sharing between oceanographic institutions. This recommendation was accepted and included in a resolution.

Advisory Body of Experts on Law of the Sea (ABELOS)

122. ABELOS, created as a working group to explore the convergences of the Law of the Sea with the scientific initiatives of the IOC, presented the results of five years of consultations. These included: the publication of Guidelines for the Transfer of Marine Technology (which was referenced both in resolutions and the final text of the report to ensure its use by Member States); the Protocol for IOC Implementation of LOS Article 247; and the Analysis of the Practices of Member States with Respect to LOS Parts XIII (Marine Scientific Research) and XIV (Transfer of

Marine Technology); and the state of deliberations regarding the legal framework for the collection of oceanographic data. The last of these is unfinished and quite controversial, thus considered by the majority of IOC Member States the most crucial discussion yet considered by the working group. ABELOS will meet in the spring of 2006 in Malaga, Spain; the U.S. will need to generate a collation of like-minded partners prior to this event.

2006-2007 Biennium Budget: Secretariat's Draft Rejected in Favor of Interim Placeholder

123. The UNESCO Director-General's budget proposal -- likely be accepted by the UNESCO General Conference in October 2005 -- calls for decreasing the regular budget allocation to the IOC by approximately 900K USD for 2006-2007. In response to this decrease, the IOC Secretariat presented a draft budget that, lacking clear rationale, was not accepted by the Assembly. The Assembly did endorse a revised budget created after careful consideration by the Financial Committee (guided strongly by the U.S.) that applied a uniform cut (approximately 26 percent) to all IOC programs as an interim measure. Chair of the Financial Committee Capt. Javier Valladares (Argentina) will host a virtual intersessional committee to explore future scenarios for the organization that could be used to establish priorities for medium and long-term plans, predicated - as suggested by the USDEL - on IOC mission priorities and a consistent set of program performance metrics.

124. (Note: The IOC budget cuts were precipitated by the adoption by the UNESCO Executive Board of a resolution recommending that the overall UNESCO budget remain level at \$610 million for the 2006-2007 biennium. End Note)

Elections: U.S. Re-elected to IOC Executive Board

125. The Assembly elected a chair, five vice-chairs (one per electoral group) and members of the Executive Council for the 24th session of the Assembly. All nominees were elected by acclamation, except for Group IV Council nominees; 9 countries presented candidacies for 8 positions, thus necessitating a vote by secret ballot in plenary.

Chair - David Pugh (UK)

Vice-Chairs: Mario Ruivo (Portugal), Alexander Frolov (Russia), C. de N. Javier A. Valladares (Argentina), Neville Smith (Australia), and Alfonse Dubi (Tanzania).
Group I (Western Europe & North America) - The U.S. was elected by acclamation, along with Belgium, Germany, Norway, Canada, Greece, Turkey, France, and Italy.
Group II (Eastern Europe & Russia) - The Ukraine was newly elected by acclamation, joining the Russian Federation.

Group III (Latin America & South America) - Brazil, Cuba, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico. Uruguay originally submitted a request for a seat on G-III but withdrew its nomination thus avoiding a vote in plenary and clearing the way for election by acclamation of the other Group III nominees.

Group IV - China, Japan, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Republic of Korea were elected while Iran, which had submitted its nomination at the last minute, was the odd man out. A total of 90 countries voted on the Group IV seats.

Group V - Congo, Kuwait, South Africa, Egypt, Mauritius, Tunisia, Kenya, and Nigeria. In a bit of confusion, Tunisia, which had withdrawn its nomination for vice-chair, also noted that it had not received its government's endorsement for a seat on the Executive Council. Tunisia later reported that the matter had been reconsidered and that it would accept a seat on the Executive Council.

Oliver